

where he wishes to be, advances, and hesitates, and turns, and inquires, and becomes, at each corner, still more inextricably perplexed."¹* A man in this situation feels he shall be very unfortunate if he cannot accomplish more than he can understand.—Is not this frequently, when brought to the practical test, the state of a mind not disposed in general to undervalue its own judgment ?

In cases where judgment is not so completely bewildered, you will yet perceive a great practical distrust of it. A man has perhaps advanced a considerable way towards a decision, but then lingers at a small distance from it, till necessity, with a stronger hand than conviction, impels him upon it. He cannot see the whole length of the question, and suspects the part beyond his sight to be the most important/for the most essential point and stress of it may be there. He fears that certain possible consequences, if they should follow, would cause him to reproach himself for his present determination. He wonders how this or the other person would have acted in the same circumstances; eagerly catches at anything like a respectable precedent; would be perfectly willing to forego the pride of setting an example, for the safety of following one; and looks anxiously round to know what each person may think on the subject; while the various and opposite opinions to which he listens, perhaps only serve to confound his perception of the track of thought by which he had hoped to reach his conclusion. Even when that conclusion is obtained, there are not many minds that might not be brought a few degrees back into dubious hesitation, by a man of respected understanding saying, in a confident tone, Your plan is injudicious ; your selection is unfortunate ; the event will disappoint you.

It cannot be supposed that I am maintaining such an absurdity as that a man's complete reliance on his own Judgment is a proof of its strength and rectitude. Intense stupidity may be in this point the rival of clear-sighted wisdom. I had once some knowledge of a person whom no mortal could have surpassed, not Cromwell or Strafford,

* "Why does not the man call a hackney-coach?" a gay reader, I am aware, will say of the person so bemazed in the great town. So he might, certainly; (that is, if he know where to find one;) and the gay reader and I have only to deplore that there is no parallel convenience for the assistance of perplexed understandings.